US, Iran agree on roadmap for final deal within 60 days at Swiss talks

ISLAMABAD/ZURICH, JUNE 22: The US and Iran have agreed on a roadmap aimed at reaching a final agreement within 60 days after hours-long talks at the Swiss resort of Burgenstock, mediators Qatar and Pakistan said on Monday, describing the progress as "encouraging."

In a joint statement, the mediators said that the talks were conducted in a "positive and constructive" atmosphere.

"Encouraging progress has been made, including the creation of a mechanism for further technical talks," the joint statement said.

The high-level talks at the Lake Lucerne Summit in Switzerland, held on Sunday and Monday, took place under the framework of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the US and Iran on Thursday to advance negotiations on regional security and other contentious issues.

While the US team was led by Vice President JD Vance, the Iranian delegation was led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani also participated in the discussions, facilitating the negotiations.

In the joint statement issued after the conclusion of the Lake Lucerne Summit, the first high-level committee meeting since the signing of the MoU, the mediators said that representatives of Iran, the US, Pakistan, and Qatar reviewed progress made under the agreement.

Building on the MoU, the parties have agreed to the establishment of a High-Level Committee, which will provide political oversight on the mediation, it said.

The committee will receive regular reports from chief negotiators and supervise specialised working groups focused on nuclear, sanctions and dispute resolution mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of the MoU and oversee progress on issues covered under the framework.

"The High Level Committee has agreed upon a roadmap towards reaching a final deal within 60 days, laying the foundation for the immediate commencement of further technical talks," the joint statement said.

It added that a dedicated communication channel has been established between the parties for the period specified in the MoU to prevent incidents and miscommunication and to facilitate the safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.

The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, is considered the world's most important oil transit chokepoint. It serves as a key route for crude oil exports from major Gulf producers, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE and Iran.

Recently, the Iran-US war and restrictions on shipping through the Strait disrupted oil flows, triggering concerns over global energy supplies and contributing to volatility in crude prices.

According to the joint statement, the parties also agreed on the creation of a de-confliction cell, between the parties, the Lebanese Republic and facilitated by the mediators, to ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon as per the MoU.

In a post on X, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Pakistani and Qatari mediators have delivered "major progress" to end the Lebanon War. He said the first "real test" would be the Lebanon deconfliction cell.

A ceasefire brokered in Lebanon over the weekend appeared to remain in effect, with Israel easing some restrictions in areas near the border.

However, Israel and Hezbollah are not parties to the US-Iran understanding. Israel has said its forces will remain in southern Lebanon until security threats are eliminated, while Hezbollah said it will halt attacks only if Israel commits to withdrawing its troops.

The joint statement said the mediating parties will continue to do their utmost to ensure that the negotiations continue to be conducted in a constructive atmosphere with the aim of reaching a final deal. Meanwhile, US Vice President J D Vance told the press that "peace requires give and take".

"This is a historic meet. Never before have Iranian and American leadership met at such a high level outside of Islamabad," he said on Sunday.

"What today really represents is the beginning of a technical negotiation that's not going to solve every disagreement, but is going to allow us to sit together as teams, for the first time really in history, to figure out what matters most to the respective parties, to settle those issues, to solve those issues, and get to a better tomorrow," he said.

"The reason why the political leadership of the respective countries is here is because we wanted to, first of all, set up the structure for these technical negotiations, and second of all, make sure that our teams have our full support and know they can always call on us to break through any barriers."

Vance, thanking the US president, said a great deal had "already been accomplished" and the team looked forward to seeing "how much more we can accomplish together".

"Can we change relations in the Middle East, or do we go back to doing things the old way?" he said. "Where Iran and the Gulf have had an unfriendly relationship, or Iran has been a driver of regional instability? We see a future where everyone can work together to promote peace and prosperity for everyone."

Pakistan and Qatar also thanked friendly countries for their support and contribution to the ongoing negotiations.

On Monday, Prime Minister Sharif said that the first High-Level Committee Meeting under the framework of the MoU "concluded successfully" in Burgenstock.

"The discussions were held in a positive and constructive atmosphere and yielded encouraging progress, including agreement on a roadmap toward a final deal within 60 days, the establishment of a High-Level Committee to provide political oversight, and the commencement of further technical talks," he said in a statement on X.

"Pakistan will continue to play its honest and sincere role in advancing dialogue and diplomacy towards a peaceful and lasting resolution," he added.

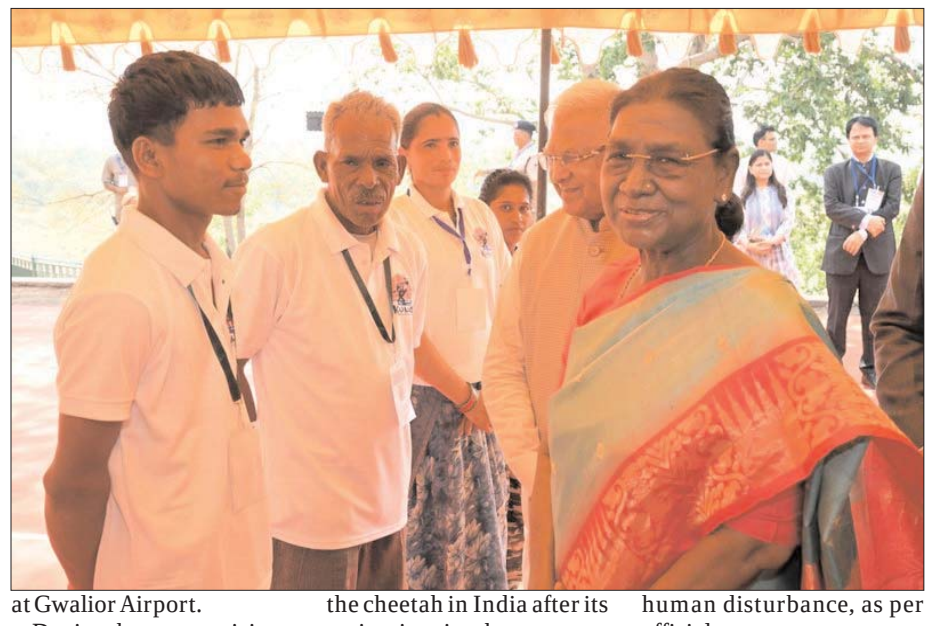
Day 3 of CJP sit-in at Delhi's Jantar Mantar: Dipke steps up attack over NEET row

NEW DELHI, JUN 22: The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) continued its sit-in protest at Jantar Mantar here for a third straight day on Monday, with founder Abhijeet Dipke stepping up his attack on the Centre over alleged examination irregularities and the NEET paper-leak controversy.

The protest, which began on Saturday afternoon, continued through the night, with supporters staying at the venue amid police deployment. Some NEET aspirants who appeared for the re-examination on Sunday have also joined the protest, sharing their experiences and demanding accountability. Addressing the protesters, Dipke questioned the BJP-led Centre's response to students who were not allowed to appear for the re-exam after they arrived late by a few minutes, saying authorities are "punishing students", while failing to take action over the alleged paper leak. (Agencies)

President Murmu wraps up 5-day MP tour after visit to Project Cheetah in Kuno

GWALIOR, JUN 22: President Droupadi Murmu on Monday concluded her five-day visit to Madhya Pradesh, departing from Gwalior after spending a day at Kuno National Park, home to the reintroduced cheetahs.



Murmu visited the Kuno National Park, located in MP's Sheopur district, on Sunday and took a tour of the Cheetah Command and Control Centre. She was briefed on the monitoring and tracking mechanisms for the big cats.

She also viewed an exhibition showcasing the progress achieved under the cheetah reintroduction project so far.

On Monday, the President left from Kuno for Gwalior, from where she departed for Delhi in an Indian Air Force plane, an official said.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel, several state ministers and senior officials bid her farewell at Gwalior Airport.

During her state visit to Botswana in November 2025, Murmu had witnessed the symbolic donation of eight cheetahs, which were brought to Kuno in February this year.

The Project Cheetah, launched on September 17, 2022, aims to reintroduce the cheetah in India after its extinction in the country, embodying India's steadfast commitment to biodiversity restoration.

Under the project, the Kuno National Park has been developed as India's first cheetah reintroduction site, as it offers ideal habitat, abundant prey, and minimal human disturbance, as per officials.

The first batch of cheetahs was brought to the Kuno National Park from Namibia in September 2022, the second batch arrived from South Africa in February 2023, and the third batch was brought from Botswana in February 2026. (Agencies)

Ananya Panday urges audiences to support all kinds of films in theatres

MUMBAI, JUNE 22: Actor Ananya Panday is urging audiences to watch diverse films in theatres as she believes nothing can replace the big screen experience.

The actor's last two films, a romance-drama "Chand Mera Dil" and romantic-comedy, "Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri" were not commercial hits.

Calling herself a "huge cinema lover", Panday said she enjoys watching diverse genres on the big screen.

"I love going and watching every kind of a movie in a cinema and if I could go say something to people it would be like, 'Just go and watch a movie in cinema'. There's nothing like it. There's nothing that can replace that experience of sitting down, eating popcorn, having a drink, and living that experience for two or two-and-half hours. I would urge more people (to go to theatres)," Panday told PTI in an interview.

Talking about her last release, the actor said that every film charts its own course and destiny, irrespective of box office expectations.

"I feel every film has a journey and fate. We got a lot of love for our performances, and the music (in 'Chand Mera Dil'). The film was well-received. I think films are forever and people will keep watching films," Panday said.

Panday, 27, was speaking on the sidelines of Amazon India's Beautyverse, a flagship beauty discovery experience. Held last week here, it featured a host of celebrities including Panday, Shilpa Shetty, Sonakshi Sinha, Karisma Kapoor, Jacqueline Fernandez, Mira Kapoor, Urfi Javed, and Maheep Kapoor, among others.

On a query about the constant scrutiny women face, both on and off screen, the actor said it is an issue that cannot be changed overnight.

"It has been going on for years and years and it is not something that if I say something, things will make a difference and change. But I can do what is in my capacity, like when is the time and place to dress up, we are here (at Beautyverse) so I'm dressing up and being glamourous," Panday said.

"But if I'm off beauty or not shooting something or meant to dress up, I'll be most myself as possible, I'll post pictures about it and I'll show everyone that, I did not wake up like this. So, that the best I can do," the actor said. (PTI)

German journalist released from Syrian prison after several months, back in Berlin

BERLIN, JUNE 22: A German journalist whose fate was unknown for months after she was detained in Syria has been released, her lawyer said Monday.

Eva Maria Michelmann was released from a prison in Damascus on Friday and arrived back in Berlin the same day, the lawyer, Roland Meister, said in a statement. "She's doing as well as can be expected under the circumstances," Meister said, adding that "this cautious wording is not an all-clear as to the physical and psychological consequences of her detention."

The 36-year-old reporter and a Kurdish-Turkish colleague were detained by Syrian government forces in January during the takeover of Raqqa amid military operations against the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Michelmann's whereabouts were unknown until the Syrian government confirmed her detention days after the Committee to Protect Journalists, or CPJ, demanded her release in April and international pressure by media and NGOs increased around her release.

Her colleague, Kurdish-Turkish reporter Ahmet Polad, has not been freed and his whereabouts are still not clear.

"We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Ahmet Polad," said Meister, adding that unrestricted access to him must be provided for doctors, lawyers and his family.

Michelmann, who is originally from the western German city of Cologne, had been reporting from Syria since 2022.

Oppn parties worried over BSP fielding Brahmin candidates for UP polls: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, JUNE 22: *Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Monday claimed that opposition parties, especially the Samajwadi Party (SP), have become anxious after her party started fielding Brahmin leaders as candidates for the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.*

In a post on X, the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said the BSP's move to connect with upper caste communities, particularly Brahmins, and give them representation in the elections had created "restlessness" among rival parties.

"Since the BSP started including upper caste society, especially Brahmins, and began making them candidates for the upcoming Assembly elections, all opposition parties, especially the SP, are showing anxiety," she said.

Mayawati said this was due to the possibility of the BSP forming a full majority Government with the support of the Brahmin community, similar to 2007.

The four-time UP CM claimed that the interests of the Brahmin community in Uttar Pradesh were safe only with the BSP and said her party, following the principle of "Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay", had ensured respect and participation for all sections during its government.

The BSP chief said Brahmins were joining her party on the basis of social harmony and expressed confidence that they would receive the same respect under a BSP government.

She added that people from other upper caste communities, including Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, would also be given tickets based on their preparedness and participation.

Mayawati said the BSP did not believe in "lollipop politics" and considered the welfare of all sections and maintaining law and order as its constitutional responsibility.

The BSP has been announcing assembly constituency-wise in-charges/candidates as part of its preparations for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls scheduled next year. (PTI)

Central body finds 46 drug samples not of standard quality for May

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22: The Central Drugs Laboratories found 46 drug samples manufactured by various firms to be "not of standard quality (NSQ)" in its monthly drug alert for May, health ministry officials said on Monday.

Further, the State Drugs Testing Laboratories have identified 113 drug samples as NSQ, they said.

According to routine regulatory surveillance activity, the list of NSQ and spurious drugs is being displayed on the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) portal on a monthly basis. "For the month of May 2026, Central Drugs Laboratories have identified 46 drug samples to be Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) and State Drugs Testing Laboratories have identified 113 drug samples as NSQ," a health ministry statement said.

Identification of drug samples as NSQ is done based on failure of the drug sample in one or the other specified quality parameters. The failure is specific to the drug products of the batch tested by the government laboratory and it does not warrant any concerns on the other drug products available in the market, it said.

Further, in May 2026, one drug sample from Assam was identified as a spurious drug, which was manufactured by unauthorised manufacturers using a brand name owned by another company; the matter is under investigation and action will be taken according to the Act and Rules.

This action of identifying NSQ and spurious medicines is taken on a regular basis in collaboration with state regulators to ensure that these drugs are identified and removed from the market. (PTI)